

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
 POLLUTION/SITUATION REPORT  
 Las Conchas Wildfires - Removal Polrep  
 Initial Removal Polrep



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
 Region VI**

**Subject:** **POLREP #1**  
**Coordination and Sampling**  
**Las Conchas Wildfires**

**Santa Fe, NM**  
**Latitude: 35.5705630 Longitude: -106.0873716**

**To:** Ragan Broyles, Superfund Division  
 Dana Tulis, U.S. EPA HQ  
 Art Volmer, NM

**From:** Greg Fife, OSC

**Date:** 6/30/2011

**Reporting Period:** 6/27/2011 - 6/30/2011

**1. Introduction**

**1.1 Background**

<b>Site Number:</b>	06BJ	<b>Contract Number:</b>	
<b>D.O. Number:</b>		<b>Action Memo Date:</b>	
<b>Response Authority:</b>	CERCLA	<b>Response Type:</b>	Emergency
<b>Response Lead:</b>	EPA	<b>Incident Category:</b>	
<b>NPL Status:</b>	Non NPL	<b>Operable Unit:</b>	
<b>Mobilization Date:</b>	6/27/2011	<b>Start Date:</b>	6/27/2011
<b>Demob Date:</b>		<b>Completion Date:</b>	
<b>CERCLIS ID:</b>		<b>RCRIS ID:</b>	
<b>ERNS No.:</b>		<b>State Notification:</b>	
<b>FPN#:</b>		<b>Reimbursable Account #:</b>	

**1.1.1 Incident Category**

Emergency Response.

**1.1.2 Site Description**

**Concerns about the impact of Las Conchas Wildfire impacting the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) and potential releases of radioactive waste and materials into surrounding communities. The cause of the fire is still being investigated. The fire started south west of LANL and traveled in a direction that threatened LANL. LANL was closed to all but essential personnel. The city of Los Alamos was evacuated.**

The fire is being contained and is presenting a much lower threat to LANL. The 'black areas' and fire breaks that have been created since the Cerro Grande fire from 11 years ago have been effective in protecting the LANL property. The front of the fire has passed LANL, although fire still is adjacent to the LANL perimeter. Conditions have improved enough that the LANL expects to reopen on Saturday, 7/2. Then the employees will enjoy the remainder of the holiday weekend off. The evacuation of the city will precede the lab opening. The weather report is indicating that the last of the strong winds will end today and better conditions will remain in the area for several days.

#### **1.1.2.1 Location**

The location is the area surrounding the LANL. That includes several tribal lands, the cities of Los Alamos and White Rock, National Forests and Monuments.

#### **1.1.2.2 Description of Threat**

The POTENTIAL threat is from radioactive material that could be released due to the impact of wildfires. There are legacy sites within LANL where soil is contaminated with radioactive isotopes. A firestorm within the wildfire could entrain the contamination and move it offsite. A wildfire without the firestorm has a lesser potential for lifting the contamination, not enough energy.

Within LANL property is a well known area (Area G) that is the location of containerized radioactive waste. This area is maintained and operated by LANL. Engineering controls are in place to prevent fire effecting the stored wastes including specially designed casks, shields, 'pigs', solidification, as well as fire breaks.

Another potential threat is from the facilities on LANL that use radioactive materials. Since the control of these materials is structured, the potential threat from these facilities is less.

#### **1.1.3 Preliminary Removal Assessment/Removal Site Inspection Results**

At this time, the threat is only potential. Only small fires have occurred on the LANL property and those were quickly extinguished. Those small fires were well away from any legacy site, waste area, or facilities.

The first rounds of air samples have been collected. Analytical results will be received within days.

The initial flights of the ASPECT flying laboratory have found no radiation levels above the background levels.

## **2. Current Activities**

### **2.1 Operations Section**

#### **2.1.1 Narrative**

EPA technical assistance contractor (START) and EPA's Radiological Emergency Response Team from the Office of Radiation and Indoor Air - Las Vegas (ORIA-LV) are operating air samplers around the area. Since there is no fire or plume from any radioactive area, the locations of the samplers are based on population centers and other criteria. Tribal lands including pueblos and sacred areas are a concern and air samplers are strategically placed to collect data there. Samples will be sent to laboratories to determine the concentration and activity. Among the parameters analyzed for are gross alpha radiation, gross beta radiation, a gamma scan, and specific isotopes that are or were at LANL.

The samples will be shipped for laboratory analysis as soon as practical but there is a need to allow the naturally occurring isotopes with short half-lives time to disperse. This includes naturally occurring radon, radioactive carbon, etc. The radioactive carbon is the result of the burning of trees in the wildfire. Trees naturally have radioactive carbon. These isotopes must disperse before the isotopes of concern can be identified and quantified. So, the delivery of the sample results is delayed due to the necessary step. There are also some analytical test methods that require even longer times for the sample to be prepared for measurement.

**The EPA ASPECT plane is flying over the perimeter of LANL and over the cities of White Rock and Los Alamos. Monitoring data is being provided to New Mexico Environment Department for**

public health review and assessment. Initial results have shown only background levels.

EPA sampling information will be made publically available on the New Mexico Environmental Department website at <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us> .

## 2.2 Planning Section

### 2.2.1 Anticipated Activities

#### 2.2.1.1 Planned Response Activities

Additional air samplers are being deployed and will continue as needed.

ASPECT will conduct additional flights.

The fire is being contained and is presenting a much lower threat to LANL. The 'black areas' and fire breaks that have been created since the Cerro Grande fire from 11 years ago have been effective in protecting the LANL property. The front of the fire has passed LANL, although fire still is adjacent to the LANL perimeter. Conditions have improved enough that the LANL expects to reopen on Saturday, 7/2. Then the employees will enjoy the remainder of the holiday weekend off. The evacuation of the city will precede the lab opening. The weather report is indicating that the last of the strong winds will end today and better conditions will remain in the area for several days.

As the threat of the fire impacting LANL, the EPA sampling activities will be adjusted appropriately. The State EOC will go to a shortened schedule through the holiday weekend. EPA will work out of mobile command posts and vehicles during the times when the EOC is not manned and security is not available.

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## 2.3 Logistics Section

No information available at this time.

## 2.4 Finance Section

No information available at this time.

## 2.5 Other Command Staff

### 2.5.1 Safety Officer

### 2.6 Liaison Officer

### 2.7 Information Officer

#### 2.7.1 Public Information Officer

**MEDIA ADVISORY: LANL Announces New Hours of Operation for Joint Information Center in Santa Fe**

LOS ALAMOS, New Mexico June 29, 2011 – Los Alamos National Laboratory announced that beginning today, staff at the Joint Information Center

will respond to inquiries regarding the Las Conchas Fire from the general public and the media from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. MDT daily.

The JIC is located at the Regional Development Corporation, 2209 Miguel Chavez Rd., in Santa Fe.

Media should call 505-820-1226 for updates and monitor  
and monitor

[www.nmfireinfo.com](http://www.nmfireinfo.com) for official fire updates.

### **3. Participating Entities**

No information available at this time.

### **4. Personnel On Site**

EPA Resources: 2 Federal On-Scene Coordinators.  
1 RERT On-Site Commander from ORIA-LV  
7 members of the EPA RERT  
1 EPA PIO  
1 EPA ASPECT plane and crew  
2 EPA ASPECT Support Team Members  
1 EPA Data Manager  
1 EPA Data Management Team member  
7 START contractor personnel

### **5. Definition of Terms**

No information available at this time.

### **6. Additional sources of information**

No information available at this time.

### **7. Situational Reference Materials**

No information available at this time.